

HISTORY AND DESIGN  
OF THE  
AMERICAN  
INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION.

BY GEORGE B. EMERSON,  
PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTION.

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BOSTON:  
TICKNOR, REED, AND FIELDS,

*Corner of Washington and School Streets.*

M.DCCC.XLIX.



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At a meeting of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION, held at Bangor, Maine, in August, 1848, *it was Voted*, — That the President be requested to furnish a copy of his Address on the “History and Design of the Institute” for publication.

(The remarks Mr. Emerson then made were from notes hastily prepared. In arranging them for the press, he has taken the liberty to go somewhat more fully into the history and objects of the Institute, and to repeat some things which he had said in other places.)

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## AMERICAN

# INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION.

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At the meeting of the AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION at Bangor, in Maine, on the 16th of August, 1848, the President of the Institute, Mr. G. B. EMERSON, of Boston, at the request of several gentlemen of Maine, consented to give some account of the history of the Institute, and of the ends it has in view.

It has been repeatedly asked (he said), and it will naturally be again asked by many who hear the name for the first time, What is the American Institute of Instruction? What has it done? What does it propose to do? Who are they who come here to represent it? What do they wish to effect? Why have they come here?

I shall endeavor briefly to answer some of these questions.

Eighteen years ago, a few teachers and other friends of education met together in Boston to see what could be done to strengthen and advance the cause in which they were interested and engaged. After several meetings, they agreed to extend their invitations to all, in other parts of the country, as well as in Massachusetts, who should feel inclined to meet with them. The invitations were widely circulated; and, in August of 1830, several hundred

persons, most of them teachers, assembled in Boston from at least eleven different States, and formed this Institute.

The teachers from Massachusetts had proposed to give the contemplated association a somewhat modest name, — The Associated Teachers of Massachusetts, — or some similar title; but the votes from other States prevailed, and the more ambitious name by which the Institute is now known was adopted.

The leading object of the American Institute of Instruction is to promote the cause of popular education, by diffusing useful knowledge in regard to it. The members met originally, and they have continued to meet, for the purpose of elevating the character of instruction, of widening its sphere, of ascertaining more clearly what should be its objects, and of perfecting its methods; for the purpose of raising the teacher, by making him feel how high and noble is the work in which he is engaged, how extensive and thorough must be his preparation, and how entire his devotion; for the purpose of making more apparent to our fellow-citizens the absolute importance of education to the existence and continuance of our free institutions, and to the advancement of our race; and thence the duty of improving our schools, especially our Common Schools. They have met, and they continue to meet, to compare observations and opinions, and to contribute the experience of each to a common stock for the benefit of all. In short, they meet to quicken to a warmer glow the fire in their own breast, and to kindle it as far as possible in the breast of others.

The Institute has continued to meet annually until this day, holding a session of three or four days, and hearing from twelve to seventeen lectures, each year. It has enlisted in its service many of the ablest and most distinguished friends of education; and, at its annual meetings, it has had lectures, reports, and

discussions upon most of the subjects of interest to the practical teacher, and to the community as acted on by him. Many of these reports and lectures, delivered by men eminent in their respective professions, and by skilful teachers, upon subjects with which they were most familiar, are published, and form a body of science, thought, and practical wisdom, unsurpassed, we think, by any series of works in the language on the subject of education.\*

It has had lectures and discussions, and has published prize essays and reports, by men thoroughly versed in the subjects, upon the construction, arrangement, furnishing, warming, ventilating, and apparatus of school-houses and school-rooms; and has done something, we trust, towards the vast improvements, in all these particulars, which have within a few years been made.

It has had lectures upon physical education, from some of the most eminent physicians and physiologists of New England; upon methods of instruction and discipline, from many of the most experienced teachers; upon the moral relations of education, from some of the deepest thinkers and best men; upon numerous points in literature, as directly affecting education, from some of its best scholars; upon its political and legal relations, from profound civilians and jurists; upon leading points in natural, mathematical, and physical science, from some of the most scientific men of the country.

The special office of a teacher, and the object of his science, have been pointed out to us by that clear and original thinker, Francis Wayland. Modes of instruction in the mathematical and physical sciences have been explained to us by those who united the necessary knowledge with practical skill in teaching; in Arith-

\* The meeting at Bangor was the nineteenth, and the volume containing the lectures delivered there is the nineteenth of the series.



metic, by Warren Colburn and Adams ; in Geometry, by Sherwin and Grund ; in Geography, by Woodbridge, Carter, Fleming, and Fowle ; in Language, ancient and modern, by Ticknor and Cleveland, Crosby and Felton, Packard and Mulligan, Howe and Weld, Huntington and Winslow ; in Natural History, by Gould, Durgin and Miles, President Hale and W. Channing, W. A. Alcott and J. L. Russell, Alonzo Gray and Charles Brooks ; in Reading, by Russell, Pierce, and Greene ; in Spelling, by G. F. Thayer ; and on Spelling Books, by H. Mann ; in Composition and Rhetoric, by Newman, Parker, and Rand ; in Elocution, by Stone and Fosdick, Russell and Murdock ; in Grammar, by Brown and Parker ; in Penmanship, by Foster. Judge Story has told us how much of the theory of Government should be taught in schools ; and Mr. Lawrence, how much of the principles of Law. J. L. Parkhurst and S. R. Hall have told us how a school may be managed without appealing to emulation ; and Leonard Withington and Joseph Emerson, how it may be managed with. We have had lectures on the Relations of Education to a Republic, from Bellows and Horace Mann ; on Chemistry, from C. T. Jackson ; on Physical Science, from J. Pierpont ; on Music, from Woodbridge, Harrington, and Johnson ; on History, from G. S. Hillard and S. Adams ; on Moral Science, from A. H. Everett ; on Physical Education, from Drs. Warren and Hayward, Jackson and Ware, of Boston, Parsons of Providence, and Peirson of Salem ; on Physiology, from Drs. Reynolds, Metcalfe, Alcott, and Jarvis ; and on School Architecture and Furnishing, from Adams and the elder Woodbridge. We have had an elaborate Report upon School-rooms, by Bailey, and a Prize Essay, by Alcott ; lectures on School Discipline, by M'Kean, S. R. Hall, and J. Hale ; on School Management, by T. Dwight and R. S. Howard ; on Elementary



Education, by Russell, Brooks, Alcott, Perry, and Palmer ; on Moral Education, by J. Abbott, Blanchard, Robinson, Waterston, Dr. Bartlett, and President Bates ; on Religious Education, by Professor Stowe and President Humphrey ; on Moral Influence, by Mr. Hooker, Professor Stowe, Mr. Belcher, and Jacob Abbott.

We have had lectures on the development and education of the mental faculties, from Messrs. Carter, Burton, Fowle, May, Rodman, and Brooks ; and on the philosophy of mind, from Gregg and Emerson Davis.

Few of the manifold institutions for instruction which have sprung up of late years, have been passed by without notice ; their principles, excellences, and defects, have been laid before us by persons amply competent to present them. The subject of Infant Schools and Infant Education has been fully exhibited and discussed by Russell, A. B. Alcott, Perry, and Carll ; Monitorial Instruction, by Oliver and others ; Schools of Arts, by Professor Johnson ; Manual Labor Schools, by Green ; Education for an Agricultural Population, by Samuel Nott ; and Education for the Laboring Classes, by Theodore Parker ; Academies and High Schools, by Fowler ; Lyceums, by Cleaveland ; Common Schools, by Farley, May, Northend, Putnam, Page, and others ; and Education for the Blind, by Dr. Howe.

We have had lectures upon visible illustrations ; upon the classification of a school, and the management of recitations ; upon school systems and school discipline ; on the importance of reform, and on the danger of innovation ; on securing the attention, on cultivating the affections, and on forming the taste ; on the importance of education to a republic, and on our systems of Common Schools ; on the duties of Committee-men, in relation to them ;

on the duties of parents, and on the duties of men of influence, to visit, examine, and oversee them; on the education of teachers; on the duties of teachers; on the responsibilities of teachers; on the claims, on the hardships, and on the dangers of teachers; on the dignity of the teacher's office; on his social influence; on his political influence; on the encouragements given to him, and on the complaints made against him; and on the beau-ideal of a perfect teacher.

The necessity of home preparation, and the duties of parents, have been eloquently urged by Jacob Abbott, D. P. Page, and Jason Whitman. Female education has been presented by Kimball, Russell, and Hawes. The responsibilities of the teacher's office have been urged by Dr. Hawes; the objects of education, by Mr. Fox and others; the value of Teachers' Institutes has been exhibited by Mr. Town; the importance of a special and very thorough education for teachers has been demonstrated by S. R. Hall, E. Davis, and Charles Brooks; and Cyrus Pierce and Nicholas Tillinghast, and our lost and lamented friend, David P. Page, the most successful and distinguished pioneers in Normal School instruction, have, on these and kindred subjects, by lecture and by discussion, by sympathy and by advice, encouraged, enlightened, and strengthened us. And others, not less prominent, but in other walks of life, such as Elipha White, William H. Furness, Caleb Cushing, William Sullivan, F. C. Gray, and James Walker, have been willing to aid us in the great cause, which is equally interesting to all. Such are some of the subjects which have occupied us, and such some of the persons who have given us their aid.\*

\* At the meeting of the Institute at Bangor, lectures were given on Failures in Teaching, by John Kingsbury; on the Co-operation of Parents and Teachers, by Jacob Batchelder; on the

From these lectures, from the discussions which have annually taken place, from the free interchange of opinion, and from the acquaintance we have formed with each other's feelings and character, we think we have derived substantial benefits. We think we have been getting higher views, and deeper and more earnest convictions, of the extent and importance of the teacher's work, of the objects at which he should aim, and the motives by which he should be influenced. We wish to extend these benefits to others.

You thus see what we have been doing, and what we mean to continue to do. Most of us who have come to represent the American Institute are practical teachers, who have given and are giving our lives to the work of instruction. We are all deeply and devotedly interested in the advancement of the cause of education. We have a strong fellow-feeling with teachers, and we ask them to come and take counsel together with us.

Many of us are, and most of us have been, teachers in the Common Schools. These invaluable institutions are the objects of our special interest. These we seek to elevate, — we pray that we may see elevated. As brothers, sympathizing with those who are teaching in them, and with those whose children are taught in them, — as patriots, as Christians, as men, we long for the improvement of these schools; where only are the great masses of our fellow-citizens educated, and where if they are not well educated, most of them are never to be well educated at all, anywhere. These schools, the Common Schools, we seek to do something to make what they should be.

Qualifications of the Teacher, by Nathan Munroe; on School Government, by J. D. Philbrick; on the Improvement of Common Schools, by William D. Swan; on the Power of Example in Teaching, by Thomas Sherwin; on the Common-school System of Vermont, by N. G. Clark; on the Claims of the Free School upon all classes, by W. G. Crosby; — of which the first five are in the nineteenth volume of the Institute's Lectures.

We are here as citizens to assist in building up schools, because we believe that a good school is a temple of liberty ; that education is the most important pillar in the fabric of a free state ; that, in a political as well as in a moral sense, it is only the *truth*, the knowledge of the TRUTH, which can make men free. We may not present to you many strikingly new truths ; yet we do not despair of even saying some things which are new. Devoted, as many of us are, life and heart, wholly to the teacher's work, we humbly believe that we do sometimes discover something new ; new methods, new modes of influencing the conduct, new modes of presenting truth, and new modes of acting on the mind of a child. We at least perceive new relations between things old and familiar, and a new value in things known and despised. Walking, as we often do, on the shores of the vast ocean of infinite truth, we sometimes pick up a stone more beautiful and precious than we have seen before ; and we feel that we are revived and invigorated by the air that breathes from that ocean towards which we are looking.

But, if we cannot often offer you a new truth, we can at least invite you to look with us at some truths that are old. We believe, and we are here because we believe, that the most precious thing under heaven, — if, indeed, it is to be considered *under* heaven, — is a highly endowed and highly educated human soul ; but we believe that the soul *must be educated* ; that the completely uneducated soul is brutish, and little better than the life of a beast ; that he therefore who aids another in his education, in the awakening and development of his faculties, offers him the most precious gift that one human being can offer to another. Souls of the highest endowments, of boundless capacities, we believe to be embodied, by the hand of the Infinite Father, along these plains, through these woods, on these hills, by these shores,



— to be gathered in these school-houses, as profusely as in any, even the most favored spot on earth. We wish you to learn, with us, how to value them, how to educate them, how to render their minds — to use the noble language of the first President of this society — “the fittest possible instruments for discovering, applying, and obeying the laws under which God has placed the universe.” This we believe to be the great object of the science of education. We believe, and we are here, again I say, because we believe, in the almost boundless influence of the teacher, — the right-minded, right-hearted, and rightly-informed teacher, — in moulding this priceless soul, in forming it to this great end. But to do this, — to do it well, to do it as it should be done, indeed, to do it at all, — the teacher must become right-minded and right-hearted himself; that is, he must have his intellectual and his moral nature rightly and highly educated.

Come, then, teachers, and endeavor to learn with us, how to educate ourselves that we may help to educate God’s children to understand his laws, and be the ministers of His will; to *discover*, *apply*, and OBEY, the laws under which He has placed his universe. Let us endeavor to learn to fill ourselves with knowledge, that we may be able to dispel ignorance; to understand the laws of mind, that we may act upon the mind; to apprehend aright the truths of science, that we may present them aright to the ardent and inquiring mind of the child; to study his moral nature, and train our own, that we may overcome his rising, angry, and fierce passions by our gentleness and kindness; prevent his falsehood by our truthfulness; overcome his stubbornness by our patient forbearance; his distrust by our confidence; his fear and his enmity by our love; in one word, — his evil by our abundant good.

The world rings with the harsh and horrid sounds

of war. Let us do what we can to raise up a generation of lovers of peace, by filling souls with peace, in the spirit of Him whose blessing was peace, — in the spirit of the God of peace.

The happiness of thousands of homes is sacrificed to the demon of intemperance and inordinate desires. Let us learn and let us teach to be temperate in all things. Let us show, by precept, and a thousand times more by our example, the great lesson of self-control; that he that ruleth his own spirit is greater than he that taketh a city.

The fair face of God's beautiful earth is deformed by the fierce struggles that are going on upon its surface for power and wealth; each one, among millions, clutching ravenously, and holding desperately, whatever he can reach. Let us do what we can, — we may each do something, — we may each do much, with every one of those placed within our influence, — to supplant or prevent the growth of these selfish passions, by awakening the soul to the love of the true and the beautiful in the creation; to a perception of the loveliness of charity, and the greatness of humility and self-denial; by endeavoring to substitute the spirit of co-operation for that of competition; the ambition of helping one another for the emulation of surpassing one another.

We have come here, then, because we think this work of education is one of the best and noblest in which men can be engaged; and we have come to ask you to aid us in it, to listen to our lectures, to share in our discussions, to add your experience to ours, to correct us if you think us wrong, to help us if you find us right.





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